

SPEED AND STASIS: FEMININITY AND SYMBOLISM
IN JOHN DOS PASSOS'S *1919*

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ABSTRACT

My thesis connects the ideas of speed, movement, symbolism and feminism in Dos Passos's work *1919*, the second book of the *U.S.A.* trilogy. For the women in the novel—Janey Williams, Eveline Hutchins, Eleanor Stoddard, and Daughter— there is an ever-present tension in their existence as they struggle between the static roles available for women as symbolic figures outside of time and the personal mobility that allows them to participate in history. By using speed as a measure of extreme behavior, I examine the degrees to which women could move outside of their domestic sphere of inequality and the speed at which they could safely do so. The first chapter of this paper focuses on Daughter, who shows that even excessive speed and mobility can be stifling, leaving one reduced to a symbol. By noting her obvious connections to futurism, I show that she oversteps the boundaries of acceptable femininity through speed, resulting in her ultimate death and the death of her unborn child. The second chapter is devoted to Janey Williams and Eleanor Stoddard, who both lose momentum and virtually stop moving at all. They become stagnant characters who are easily reduced to symbolism. Eveline is the focus of the final chapter. Her speed of movement throughout her story is consistent as she constantly refuses to be categorized, symbolized, or idolized. She is the only female character of *1919* that lives on into *The Big Money*, and for this reason she seems stands apart from the others. Finally, my epilogue addresses the direction in which the world is moving for women at the end of *1919*.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my sister, Shelby. Although we have taken very different paths in life as women, we enjoy the respect and encouragement that only sisterhood can bring. Because she loves me for what I do and because I am inspired by her daily as a mother, sister, and friend, I dedicate this work to her. I love you sissy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“The only excuse for a novelist, aside from the entertainment and vicarious living his books give the people who read them, is a sort of second-class historian of age he lives in. The ‘reality’ he misses by writing about imaginary people, he gains by being able to build a reality more nearly out of his own factual experience than a plain historian or biographer can.”

–John Dos Passos, “Statement of Belief”

“The business of a novelist is, in my opinion, to create characters first and foremost, and then to set them in the snarl of the human currents of his time, so that there results an accurate permanent record of a phase of history.”

–John Dos Passos, “The Business of a Novelist”

Over the last sixty years, the scholarship concerning John Dos Passos has continued to gain momentum and has refigured the author’s prominence in the American modernist canon. Lisa Nanney, for example, writes that Dos Passos “searched for narrative techniques that would free literary expression from outmoded linearity into the space, time and motion previously though possible only in the visual arts” (8). Like the cubists, Dos Passos sought a literary style that would break the confines of the page. This is exactly the feat accomplished when the novel presents the newsreels, the camera eye, biographies, and narrative fictions simultaneously.

Another recent development in the ongoing conversation concerns his construction of gender. Some scholars assert that Dos Passos's women are stock characters and that any real judgments made about the condition of women is lacking. Iain Colley goes as far to say that the problem with these female characters is that Dos Passos, as a male novelist, does not endow them with the "proper kind of consistency and mystery. Though they faintly spoil the form of the novel, however, they do not diminish its meaning; they are minor blemishes" (100). John Lydenberg argues that Dos Passos's characters, and particularly his female characters, are "non-characters," determined more by their inactions than actions. For example, he writes, "we do not feel their decisions to be decisions. They are simply doing so and so, and continue thus until they find themselves, or we find them, doing something else" (99). It is my view that Dos Passos has created female characters that struggle to involve themselves unsuccessfully in larger historical contents and events. They are at least acted upon by a force greater than themselves when they do not seem to be in complete control of their directions.

Yet Dos Passos's female characters, I contend, actually add to and are central to the meaning of the trilogy. Their place is one of extreme importance. Linda Wagner at least notes that what at times seems to be the "dullness" of the women's lives of the trilogy or "the dullness of the direction of those lives" is "the lack of options" (97). John Wrenn argues that Dos Passos does place his characters truly "in time." He writes, "As a realist Dos Passos reveals his characters in the historical framework of time, place, and social milieu which help to form them. These backgrounds, usually presented through the memories of the characters themselves, are various enough to provide a representative cross-section, geographically and socially of American society" (159). What Dos Passos is doing, according to Wrenn, is creating characters that must navigate time, place, and society in order to see how they will become shaped. Taking

a step back from the characters, the narrative as a whole provides a picture of history and humanity's role in it.

Unfortunately, few scholars have taken up the task of analyzing what exactly Dos Passos is doing with his female characters and whether or not any of these characterizations are intentional. Although this conversation among scholars has been relatively quiet, Janet Casey has significantly filled a gap in this discussion through her feminist readings of Dos Passos in her work *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*. While she argues that he is not a “feminist” as we use the word today, his female characters reflect social change, and she explores how Dos Passos “historicized” the female, giving her a voice in the unfolding of larger historical events. Casey argues that his conflicting representations of women as either elusive and mysterious or as stagnant and symbolic mark his critique not only of gendered dualisms but of the society that creates them. Casey rightly argues that all accounts of history are intrinsically biased (131). She goes on to say that through Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*, women regain a voice and a specific place in history, re-inscribing them in time (135).

Even though significant women from the time period are missing in sections like the biographies, by giving women a narrative voice in fiction, women in the novels are lifted from their stagnant positions, from their utter insignificance in history, to a place of meaning in the larger social context, while still emphasizing male dominance in history. Casey writes, “While the trilogy seems purposefully and carefully to reinsert women into the historical record from which they have been traditionally dismissed by distributing the fictional narratives evenly among male and female consciousness, the biographies (all portraits of men, save one) underscore the predominantly male presence in historical discourse” (153). Casey seems to believe that overall, Dos Passos did have in mind one-dimensional female characters, as her

commentary suggests: “Specific headlines throughout the Newsreels appear to present women—both individually and as a group—as empty-headed, self-absorbed, and downright silly” (Casey 137). By referring to the Newsreels, Casey suggests that the models Dos Passos had to work with were flat. She goes on to say that, “The pronounced concentration of such examples in *Nineteen Nineteen* reflects that volume’s general tendency toward more sexist representations of women, a tendency that may be related to Dos Passos’ close association with leftist groups during its period of composition.” (138) Whether Dos Passos was conscious of creating sexist representations of females or not, the finished product is more complex than meets the eye.

Especially pertinent to my study is the way in which Casey places the women of *U.S.A.* on a linear spectrum that moves from most sexually conservative to most sexually reckless. She explains:

The interplay of various attitudes toward and representations of the feminine over the course of the three volumes results in rich resonances as well as ideological clashes: the feminine in this work functions both as a conventional term of (de)valuation and an invented site of cultural resistance, and its signification dances on a spectrum between the normatively sexist and the progressively radical. (134)

This contribution of Casey’s sheds light on the way in which Dos Passos may have formed these characters to depict varying degrees of social movement. Whereas Casey examines the women in *U.S.A.* based on their sexual relations with men, I also trace their movement in personal, professional, and social terms.

My addition to the conversation, therefore, does what other scholars have failed to do: connect the ideas of speed, movement, symbolism and feminism in Dos Passos’s work. Early in his career, Dos Passos developed and held a lingering fascination with Italian Futurism, which he learned about while serving in Europe during World War I. Futurism, founded by F.T. Marinetti

in 1909, was a movement that rejected the past but glorified speed, aggression, and mechanization. While it later became associated with Fascism, in its beginnings, Futurism's concern was the future of art and culture. The basic principles of Futurism are found in the 1909 "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in which Marinetti does not hide his contempt for the past but proudly displays this sentiment in in the "creaking bones of the sickly palaces above their damp green beards" and in his jubilation that "Mythology and the Mythic Ideal are defeated at last" (39). He compares museums to graveyards and cemeteries, libraries, and academies to overbearing parents who crush the dreams of the young (42, 43). Marinetti points to "the beauty of speed" and the beauty of struggle (41). He writes, "Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece" (41).

The Futurist connections to Dos Passos's work are striking. Dos Passos's solution to complacency does not seem to be far from Marinetti's claim that war is a kind of cleansing when he writes in "A Humble Protest" that "the war, the growing acuteness of labor problems, that state of contemporary art any of them can be used as an acid to sear away the old complacency" (32). Dos Passos was interested in the mechanized spirit of humanity; like Marinetti, he wanted to shock the people into a state of action. Dos Passos's first publication, "Against American Literature" is a nod to the manifesto form and to a glorification of the future. Dos Passos argues that because America lacks a long history that would afford it its own mythologies and folklore, American literature is empty. He writes, "The only substitute for dependence on the past is dependence on the future" ("Against" 37). He writes "An all-enveloping industrialism, a new mode of life preparing, has broken down the old bridges leading to the past, has cut off the ability to retreat. Our only course is to press on," (38). The connection to Futurism here is clear. While the Futurists wanted to burn the bridges (libraries, museums, and

academies), their desire to press on to the future resonates in the words of Dos Passos. If the past is not to be the source of American culture, then perhaps the future is.

Futurism has been primarily coded as masculine since its beginnings in 1909. Illustrating this androcentric view, F.T. Marinetti also writes in “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” “We intend to glorify war . . . militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women” (42). Furthermore, he asserts that the futurists intend to “fight against moralism, feminism, and every utilitarian or opportunistic cowardice” (42). Marinetti praised the machine, violence, and war to shake the slumbering world out of complacency, which he codes primarily as feminine. Dos Passos and Marinetti seem to have similar goals in rejecting the stereotypical feminine role. The extent to which Dos Passos carries out this rejection of woman as symbol will be explored in this thesis.

The connection between Dos Passos’s female characters and speed or movement, however, is more subtle. In examining Dos Passos’s treatment of the women in *1919*, I measure each one in terms of speed and movement, in order to uncover what *1919* has to say about the appropriate behaviors for women. With a proclivity for speed, violence, and mechanization, the character Daughter steps outside of the acceptable societal boundaries, while Janey, Eleanor, and to a lesser extent Eveline all remain within a prescribed feminine sphere. Dos Passos certainly creates a historical place for women by giving them narrative attention in *1919*, but the most significant social commentary of the text is that “safe” femininity, like Janey’s, is static and unappealing. The mobile and aggressive woman Daughter, however, is dangerous and self-destructive. Between these two extremes, Eleanor is more mobile, but she ultimately becomes a cold symbol of asexuality. The most “successful” woman in the novel, I argue, is Eveline, who

maintains the delicate balance between stasis and speed in terms of her social movement and her relationship with men.

Rather than the entirety of the trilogy, *1919* is the primary focus of my thesis. More than *The 42nd Parallel* or *The Big Money*, *1919* is concerned with the impact of accelerated movement and time on gender roles. Janet Casey comments on the significance of the title of *1919* in that it isolates a specific moment in time: “That the trilogy’s second volume seeks to explore in depth a static historic moment rather than broadly describing an evolutionary social progress is suggested even but its title” (Casey 161). The novel’s title draws attention to a moment in history when time itself was under scrutiny. At this time, Henri Bergson’s philosophy of *durée* was gaining credibility. It articulates that time is fluid, with the past and the present occurring always simultaneously. Bergson blends notions of time and space into a single idea, arguing that the breaking up of discrete units of time as isolated moments is unnatural. With the advent of World War I, the speeding up of telecommunication drew significant attention to units of time when ultimatums between countries were being sent and received with as little as twenty-four-hour deadlines for response. Stephen Kern argues that these “snap judgments and hasty actions” actually led to the war itself (260). With such hasty decisions being made, rationality and diplomacy gave way to impulsive reactions. He notes how significantly time sped up and affected society as a whole: “Throughout the crisis there was not just one new faster speed for everyone to adjust to, but a series of new and variable paces that supercharged the masses” (268).

Giving women political mobility in their societies, the suffrage movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States and Europe also make the year 1919 a significant milestone in mobility of women. The following year, women would be given the right to vote. During 1919, political and social tension concerning women was undoubtedly high.

It is no surprise that the characters of *1919*, especially the women, are seen speeding through time at such a rapid pace. In terms of geography alone, the trajectories of these women span points across the U.S. and eventually across the Atlantic to war-torn Europe.

I examine *1919*'s female characters with certain feminist perspectives in mind, such as those of Susan Stewart, Susan Bordo, and Simone de Beauvoir. Stewart argues that women are made into symbols by men, forcing them into a place outside of time, and that they constantly struggle to define themselves as active historical participants (86). Stewart's ideas clearly align with those of Simone de Beauvoir, who a few generations before remarked that that men have reduced women to symbols such as "the Praying Mantis," "the Mandrake," "the Demon," "the Muse," "the Goddess Mother," or "Beatrice." She explains that men often create this symbolism because of an inability to describe or explain women. She writes, "The smallest emotion, a slight annoyance, becomes the reflection of a timeless Idea" (1271). This lessening of women's complexity is a way for men to retain power over them. Men explain women through symbolism, pushing them outside of history in to a kind of timelessness. Dos Passos seemed to be attempting to put women back into a time-centered reality, but by making three of the four women in the novel into symbols, it seems as if Dos Passos falls victim to the very flaw de Beauvoir explains. Because he cannot fully understand them, Dos Passos perhaps destroys them.

My study assumes that gender is constructed and that society informs the appropriate construction of such an identity. As Susan Bordo points out, "The construction, of course, is always homogenizing and normalizing, erasing racial, class, and other differences and insisting that all women aspire to a coercive, standardized ideal" (2243). The idealization of the female reduces her to symbolism, depriving her of difference and mobility. Bordo also argues, "The body may also operate as a metaphor for culture" (165). This metaphor is especially significant

given that Man has typically been associated with the mind, while Woman has been associated with the body. In this context, Dos Passos's female characters provide the most reliable gauge of the changes in America's social fabric at the turn of the twentieth century. In *1919*, female characters who embrace "acceptable" feminine roles, dependent on men and subservient to them, become symbols of femininity outside of time rather than active participants in history.

Interestingly, the women who assume "acceptable" roles are those who are also identified as the "New Woman." By making this connection, it seems that Dos Passos is questioning the image of the successful working woman by linking her with a lack of significance in the world around her. He makes these women sacrifice personal relationships, which in turn helps them progress in the working world without being held back. Dos Passos's "New Woman" is not one to be envied but is one who stands as a warning.

The first chapter of this paper focuses on Daughter, who shows that even excessive speed and mobility can be stifling, leaving one reduced to a symbol. By noting her obvious connections to futurism, I show that she oversteps the boundaries of acceptable femininity through speed, resulting in her ultimate death and the death of her unborn child. Daughter's inability to find a balance between speed and stasis leaves her utterly defenseless against the male dominated society that quickly reduces women to static symbols or allows them to self-destruct.

The second chapter is devoted to Janey Williams and Eleanor Stoddard, who both lose momentum and virtually stop moving at all. They become stagnant characters who are easily reduced to symbolism. Janey, stenographer and personal assistant to public relations tycoon J. Ward Moorehouse, is cold, condescending, and chaste. She is the antithesis to Daughter's speed, rebelliousness, aggressiveness, and impulsiveness. Janey is a stagnant figure, confined to a limited feminine sphere, keeping herself from the danger of self-destruction. By narrowing her

role to the stereotypically feminine, Janey becomes a symbol of “safe” femininity. The “safe” femininity of Janey’s character actually becomes a mode of self-erasure, making Janey and Daughter closer in their fates than may be immediately apparent. Through speed and stasis the two women both become symbols. Eleanor is discussed alongside Janey because of their close alignment in terms of trajectory and speed.

While Eleanor is paired with Eveline in *1919*, she comes closer to Janey in terms of identity. My separation of Eleanor and Eveline is necessary because the two move at such differing speeds and in differing trajectories in *1919*. I argue that Eveline’s story does begin to emerge in *1919* and that her narrative strand in the trilogy is one of the most interesting ones because she refuses to be reduced to a symbol. For this reason, Eveline is the focus of the final chapter. Her speed of movement throughout her story is consistent as she constantly refuses to be categorized, symbolized, or idolized. She is the only female character of *1919* that lives on into *The Big Money*, and for this reason she seems stands apart from the others.

I conclude this study by addressing the direction in which the world is moving for women at the end of *1919*. As the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 gives women the right to vote, a significant social shift for women in the years ahead is evident; however, the theory of possibilities for women is met with the harsh reality that nothing would immediately change as Eveline’s suicide in *The Big Money* ultimately shows. *1919* shows the limitations for women and, at best, shows one of them aware of her place in history, even if that place is ultimately stifling.

CHAPTER II

MOVEMENT AND DESTRUCTION: DAUGHTER AS SYMBOL OF SPEED

The women in *U.S.A.* struggle to find an appropriate balance between stasis and movement, stepping out of their traditional roles and safely maneuvering within the male-prescribed parameters. By stasis here I mean, consistency of character or the cessation of growth and mobility in the sociopolitical world. Stasis for the characters of the novel also means a hesitancy to take risks in interpersonal relationships. Tucked away in the second half of *1919*, amidst characters that carry over from *The 42nd Parallel*, Ann Elizabeth Trent, or “Daughter” as she is most often called, is the antithesis to a character like Janey Williams, who remains static and cold, unable to have relationships with men and equally unable to have a life apart from her dependence on them. Rarely conforming to what is expected of her, Daughter refuses to be made into a symbol by men. Scholars such as Colley have said that she “does not fall irrecoverably into her context, she violates the context. She is the comic-strip heroine, the drum-majorette of a faintly crude and sentimental streak in *1919*” (99). By this description, Daughter’s character seems to fall flat. Colley also asserts that “the character intended as a paragon of restless searching energy falls dead in its secret inner rhythms” (100). Colley may mean that the symbol never quite works; however, there is a larger tension between stasis and movement in Daughter’s character that he does not seem to grasp. By rebelling against one set of stereotypical values, she in turn comes to embody yet another set of symbols; her perpetual movement becomes so regularized and predictable that she becomes a symbol of the destructiveness of speed itself.

The tension between Daughter's femininity and her will to embody a more socially mobile lifestyle reveals her connection to the Italian Futurist movement of the early twentieth century. By framing her within a futurist context, we can understand how she pushes womanhood to the point of self-destruction. In his study of time and speed, Kern distinguishes two different modes of experiencing the immediate future: activity and expectation (89). He explains, "The essential difference is the orientation of the subject in time: in the mode of activity the individual goes toward the future, driving the surroundings in control events; in the mode of expectation the future comes toward the individual, who contracts against an overpowering environment" (89-90). Daughter is an expression of activity in *1919* through her speed and movement forward, which I will show in my analysis. She is in perpetual motion, moving toward something, even if she never knows quite what. The futurists, Kern writes, "will surge into the future at full throttle—innovating, challenging, and occasionally going smack" (98). What Kern finds interesting, is that most of the art forms that came out of the futurist movement did not depict "futuristic" objects (objects actually from a time in the future) but rather objects *in motion*.

Daughter is one such character who is anything but static in nature. She serves as a symbol of futurist principles in the novel as she seems to reject her own stereotypical femininity with speed and aggression. She is the title character of only two chapters of her own in the novel and is present in only one other character's story, that of Dick Savage. Although overpowered by other women in terms of sheer textual attention, she leaves a lasting impression that I contend poignantly reveals Dos Passos's presentation of a woman moving too fast and too much. Daughter's agency in the novel is astounding, but even when it seems that she is in control of her life, in reality Dos Passos does not allow her to control the direction or the intensity at which she

moves. The ultimate death of the young Texas-belle is clearly a result of her perpetual motion and speed, which culminate in an airplane crash. Her death is especially significant given the fact that she is carrying a child—the future generation. Daughter is at times overtly feminine in a traditional sense, but she is also aggressive in her speed and restlessness. The connection between her character and ideals of futurism reveal that she steps too far beyond the boundaries of balanced speed and stasis, and that her rebellion damns her to her death. Daughter's connections to speed, aggression, perpetual motion and the airplane are only a few of the ways in which she is linked to Marinetti. Conversely, her domesticity, her femininity, and her romantic notions about the past keep bound to the symbolic Victorian woman as she struggles to reconcile these two drives.

While in Texas, Daughter struggles between traditional femininity—domesticity and romance—and a need for movement and aggression. She is first introduced using sweeping superlatives that set her up as “Daddy’s Texas-belle,” already a woman who seems to have little agency: “The Trents lived on Pleasant Avenue that was the finest street in Dallas that was the biggest and fastest growing town in Texas that was the biggest state in the Union and had the blackest soil and the whitest people and America was the greatest country in the world and Daughter was Dad’s onlyest sweetest little girl” (203-204). Daughter’s world is one of the biggest and the best of America, growing fast, and generically sweet. She is an all-American girl, reduced to a symbol even in her introduction. She is known by her relationship to her father with the name “Daughter,” having no individuality of her own but dependent on a male for her identity. She is characterized as growing up running wild on the family ranch and struggling to reconciling her tomboy identity with her more feminine qualities in the relationship with the opposite sex. She is sentimental about her first love, Joe Washburn, and wavers between treating

him with hostility and trying desperately to gain his attention. When Joe comes to stay on the ranch for two weeks, “Daughter was just horrid to him, made old Hildreth give him a mean oneeyed pony to ride, put horned toads in his cot, would hand him hot chile sauce instead of catsup at table or try to get him to put salt instead of sugar in his coffee” (205-6). But Daughter truly loves Joe, who brings out the sentimentalism in her: “Joe Washburn treated her with the same grave kindness as always, and sometimes when she was acting crazy she’d catch a funny understanding kidding gleam in his keen eyes that would make her feel suddenly all weak and silly inside” (213). Even in the first few pages of Daughter’s chapter, the tension in her identity is obvious.

Daughter is fascinated with the automobile, linking her inextricably to speed: “[She] had a creamcolored pony named Coffee who’d nod his head and paw with his hoof when he wanted a lump of sugar, but some of the girls she knew had cars and Daughter and the boys kept after Dad to buy a car, a real car” (204). It doesn’t seem to be a coincidence that Marinetti was popularly known as the “caffeine of Europe” and that Daughter’s horse’s name is Coffee (Blum 7). When Dad does buy a real car, she is elated.

As she begins to move geographically her former identity in Texas becomes a source of anxiety to her father and to herself. Daughter lives a life of a tomboy, reckless and wild, and is eventually taken by her father to a finishing school in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where her rough-and-tumble exterior can be polished. Her father seems to realize that she does not fit the mold, and he makes an attempt to reduce to her to the acceptable, symbolic woman. The movement from one place to another seems to bring out a restless energy in Daughter. For example, “She was excited on the trip up on the train and loved every minute of it,” but later “Miss Tynge’s was horrid and the girls were all northern girls and so mean and made fun of her clothes . . . she hated

it” (207). Daughter does not enjoy the experience of the finishing school; she only loves the movement from place to place. She leaves impulsively for Christmas vacation when she “just decided she wouldn’t stand it any longer and one morning before anybody was up she got out of the house, walked down to the station, bought herself a ticket to Washington, and got on the first westbound train with nothing but a toothbrush and a nightgown in her handbag” (207).

Daughter seems to act without thinking so that she is in perpetual movement. On the train ride home, she is described as “so excited she couldn’t sleep lying in her berth” (207). The language used to describe her reveals a restlessness associated with being domesticized.

Before long, she is off again, this time to New York to pursue an education where her sense of speed is heightened. Dampened by the conventionality of the women she stays with while in the city, she must find her thrills going out with men and dabbling in activist causes such as labor disputes, strikes, and visiting the slums, which all allow her the opportunity to participate in specific historical events. Her movement is also reflected in the language Dos Passos uses to describe her time in New York: “She was signed up as a special student and went to lectures about Economics and English Literature and Art and talked a little occasionally with some boy who happened to be sitting next to her, but she was so much younger than anybody she met and she didn’t seem to have the right line of talk to interest them” (209). Attending lectures on such topics and talking without hesitation to strange men shows Daughter on the forefront of embracing the new freedoms for women of the twentieth century, but she does not seem to know how to mediate her impulses or how to proceed without finding herself in trouble. The sentence previously mentioned continues on and on in much the same way that we see Daughter in constant motion.

In June Daughter goes home to spend time with her family, only to realize that Texas stifles her freedom. She tries to practice domesticity to make up for her behavior but never settles on an identity that pleases both herself and the men in her life at home. For example, she “tried to make it up to Dad and the boys by baking cakes for them and attending to the housekeeping for having acted so mean and crazy all summer” (214). This time in her life shows Daughter at odds with herself, struggling between movement and stasis. After returning to New York, she receives news that her father is ill and must return home once more.

When she returns from New York to be with her ill father, her struggle for identity is again complicated by her speed and restlessness versus her sense of duty to domesticity. Brought back home, Daughter seems to settle down a bit as if the proximity to domestic life renews her strength: “Upset as she was it certainly did her good to see the wide Texas country, the spring crops beginning, a few bluebonnets in bloom” (221). It is almost as if Daughter is two people: the domestic female, rushing to care for her father on one hand and the speeding-through-life New Woman on the other. In many ways, she embraces her femininity, making her character multi-dimensional and tense. While home from New York, she almost gives up on her restlessness and perpetual motion deciding that “she was going to be an old maid and keep house for Dad. . . . She started attending lectures at Southern Methodist, doing church work, getting books out the circulating library, baking angelcake; when young girlfriends of Buster’s came to the house she acted as a chaperon” (226). The tension between Daughter’s restless nature and her seemingly guilty acceptance of her place in domesticity shows her struggle for identity, to break out beyond the traditional female role.

While caring for her father in Texas, her aggressive speed that she constantly battles becomes more pronounced as she hears of her brother Bud’s death in air pilot training for the

war. She “went down and jumped into her car . . . it made her feel better to feel the car plough through the muddy ruts and the water spraying out in a wave on either side when she went through a puddle at fifty. She averaged fortyfive all the way” (223). Frequently after this, Daughter is described as being in perpetual motion. She was “going every minute and never got any sleep . . . At the canteen, she lived in a whirl and had one or two proposals of marriage a week” (222). Daughter combats feminine emotionalism with speed and recklessness: “She got a reputation for being a little crazy after that. . . . Everything was very gay and tense. All day she worked in a canteen and evenings she went out, supper and dancing, every night with a different aviation officer. . . . [S]he felt herself moving in a brilliantly lighted daze of suppers and lights and dancing and champagne” (225). The “brilliantly lighted daze” highlights Daughter’s reeling life—bright but dizzying. Daughter’s reputation stems from the fact that she rejects the static and overly symbolic role of women and wants to be in constant movement, presumably to avoid facing the tension in her identity.

Her brother’s death changes everything and is the catalyst of Daughter’s movement to Europe. The war and the effects that have now reached her on a personal level seem to move her forward toward the outside world with a conviction that finally gives significance to her perpetual motion. “She told them that she’d signed up to go overseas for six months with the Near East Relief . . . Daughter said others had given their lives to save the world from the Germans and that she certainly could give up six months to relief work” (226). Joining the cause of relief efforts during World War I, she throws herself into a rapidly changing world at a rapid pace herself. While she navigates her freedom, her relationships with men, and the extent of her own agency, she is forced to face her limits when her life finally spins out of control through her relationship with Dick Savage.

Europe, like Texas, seems to bring out Daughter's struggle between movement and stasis. She exhibits some characteristics emotionalism and romanticism, but she also continues to move aggressively through life. For example, she displays such sensuality and romanticism in Europe: "She wanted all the time to throw herself in [Dick's] arms; there was something about the rainy landscape and the dark lascivious-eyed people and the old names of the towns and the garlic and oil the food and the smiling voices and the smell of the tiny magenta wildflowers he said were called cyclamens that made her not care about anything anymore" (323). She cannot fully accept her speed and movement or reconcile them with a traditional femininity that prizes passivity and romance.

On the other hand, many times she is described as flighty and fidgety, anxious for something to happen. For example, when Dick Savage comes to pick her up at the Near East Relief in Rome, her restless energy is evident as she says while jumping into the cab, "Those old hens make me tired," (293). Her mind and her body never seem to stop:

Tell him to hurry or Mr. Barrow'll catch us. . . . Those old hens say I have to be in by nine o'clock. I declare it's worse than Sundayschool in there. . . . It was mighty nice of you to ask me out to meet your friends, Captain Savage. . . . I was just dying to get out and see the town. . . . Isn't it wonderful? Say where does the Pope live? (293)

Daughter wants the car to go fast; she does not want to sit still and behave as if in "Sundayschool," and she wants to be out and about on the town. Her talking is seemingly endless as Dick never says a word in the cab. Later, on an outing, we see Daughter's speed as she "was off running and down the path with Dick running after her slipping and stumbling in the loose gravel and puddles" (295-96). When he notices that no one else is following from their party, Daughter says, "Oh, I hate people who won't ever go anywhere" (296). This statement alone could be said to sum up her character. She values speed and motion above anything else, to the

point that it marginalizes other parts of her identity. In a letter to Dick she says, “I don’t want to work at a desk, I want to travel around Europe and see the sights” (302). Finally, when she is headed to the airplane that will ultimately kill her, she is in a car that is speeding and swerving.

Because of these warring facets of her personality, Daughter cannot fully embrace the speed, aggression and perpetual motion that she is so easily drawn to, but she is continually on the move. At times, she clings to the very symbol of woman that the Futurists abhor. She cannot find a happy medium, but the two roles that she oscillates between are both somewhat static. The conventional, domestic Texas belle and the perpetually moving youth are both “types.” By “types” I mean that both roles are stereotypical and static. By defining herself in an either-or way, Daughter becomes a symbol of either type of woman. Her speed, aggression, and perpetual motion move her forward in life but only so far. She moves out of Texas to New York where she becomes involved in political protests and begins to live a life she has chosen for herself, and again she moves from Texas to Europe where she makes an effort to lead a romantic and helpful life after the war. However, the traits that move her forward are also the ones that end her life. By rebelling against traditional womanhood, Daughter launches herself with great speed toward her death, both literally and socially.

When the results of her recklessness finally catch up with her, Daughter seems to have no way out save death. Her constant speed and movement have left her without choices, in a place of stasis. Pregnant with the child of Dick Savage, she embraces the idea of being a wife and mother until she realizes that if she chooses to keep the child, she will do so alone. For all her progressiveness, she cannot endure the thought of motherhood without a husband. In despair because she cannot fulfill the ideal image of woman through motherhood, she chooses recklessness and speed, which ironically caused her predicament to begin with. She says, “I

hate losing my job though and having to go home in disgrace . . . [T]hat's about the size of it . . . [I]t's all my fault for running around like a little nitwit" (327). While in a bathroom, Daughter feels the shame of her pregnancy when a French woman seems to be asking her if this child is the first and how many months along she is: "Suddenly, she decided she'd kill herself" (327). When she's out with a group of people, Daughter becomes seemingly invisible to Dick, who is present: "Dick must have seen her but he wouldn't look at her. She didn't care anymore about anything. . . She didn't care; she had decided she'd kill herself" (328). The final judgment comes from Eleanor, "whom she'd been so friendly with in Rome," who "gave her a quick inquisitive cold stare that made her feel terrible" (329). Against Eleanor, who seems to be navigating the changing world of femininity with more success, Daughter sees herself as a failure. Upon feeling her last wave of hopelessness, she convinces a drunken French pilot to take her up in plane where she knows she will end her life. The car speeds to the airfield, exactly what we would expect for the final moments of her life, but it is not only the speed that is so ironic in light of Futurism. The mechanization that the futurists praised, the speed, violence and motion that the futurists sought to embody result in Daughter's death.

Just as in her brother's tragic death in an airplane, Daughter's final moments are spent in the very mechanism that was praised by modernity and Marinetti himself. What would have thrilled Marinetti—"Her body was throbbing with the roar of the engine"—only seals Daughter's fate as she becomes one with the machine that kills her (332). Even more significantly, the child that she carries will never be born. It is this lack of progeny that most significantly reveals the damnable nature of Daughter's speed and movement. In true Dos Passos form, we are offered no commentary on Daughter's death, just that she "saw the shine of a wing gliding by itself a little way from the plane. The spinning sun blinded her they as dropped" (333). While we can see

some traces of futurist ideals in this passage—the plane that seems to be the answer Daughter has been looking for, her impulsivity that got her to that point, the speed of the car that drove her to the airplane—she ultimately second guesses herself, and tries to escape from the ensuing tragedy: “Everything was full of the roar of the engine. Suddenly she was scared and sober, thought about home and Dad and Buster and the boat she was going to take tomorrow, no it was today. . . . She started to fumble with the straps to unstrap them. It was crazy going up like this” (332). Her perpetual motion has not come without a price.

Daughter’s character clearly demonstrates by way of Futurism that such speed and movement for a woman lead to death and destruction. We are left with a picture of a plane falling from the sky—pointing out that speed ultimately limits women. In some ways it seems that Daughter comes full circle back to the realm of the symbolic by representing speed as an end in itself; thus, female mobility falls prey to the very idea of mobility. She represents the end that Futurism faces as it will crash and burn. She represents the woman who overstepped her boundaries with dire consequences.

CHAPTER III
STUNTED MOVEMENT: STASIS AND SELF-ERASURE IN
JANEY WILLIAMS AND ELEANOR STODDARD

De Beauvoir notes that “One of the basic problems for women, as had been seen, is reconciling the reproductive role and productive work. The fundamental reason that woman, since the beginning of history, has been consigned to domestic labor and prohibited from taking part in shaping the world is her enslavement to the generative function” (136). De Beauvoir argues that engaging in reproductive and domestic responsibilities hinders women from taking part in shaping the world. Dos Passos’s Janey Williams and Eleanor Stoddard show the false dichotomy of De Beauvoir’s assertion through their failure to participate in history even when they choose productive work over a domestic role of wife and mother. Their ability to shape the world around them is limited even when the confines of domesticity are overcome. Both women, unlike to *Daughter*, do not speed up their movement in the years of the Great War; rather, their movements become stunted as they solidify into asexual working women who never marry and who make little impact on the world around them. However, historical evidence shows that working women did make an impact on the world. Because of them, possibilities for women were explored on a larger scale than ever before. Janey’s movement comes to a halt in *1919*, arguably because of her attachment to J. Ward Moorehouse. Interestingly, Wagner argues that Janey along with Eleanor Stoddard’s stories connect at least tangentially to Moorehouse’s so that these female characters are seen by critics as “minor” (97). While I am not sure that “minor” is

the best term to describe these characters, there is some truth to Wagner's claim. Both Janey and Eleanor find themselves so dependent on him for narrative grounding and significance that they lose much of the identity and mobility that helped to define them in *The 42nd Parallel*. If *Daughter* shows us that mobility itself can ensnare women back into symbolism Janey and Eleanor, the subjects of this chapter, fall prey to symbolism even though they move at a more measured pace.

Janey's character in the first novel of the trilogy is complex: she is vibrant and mobile yet attached to men and voiceless at times. By *1919*, her movement has ceased as she has completely reduced her identity to that of her career. Like *Daughter*, whose name reflects her relationship to her father quite literally, Janey's identity in *1919* is simply Miss Williams, secretary to a public relations tycoon. She is defined by her relationship with men throughout her life, and when connected to Moorehouse, she loses all agency, voice, and presence in the world. She becomes a symbol of the "successful" pink-collar woman, but the price of her economic self-sufficiency is self-erasure.

Scholars have tended to see Janey in terms of her cold, rigid nature. While not specifically referring to her, Wagner's comments on the ineffectualness of characters that lose their identities seem to resonate most clearly when considering Janey's eventual stasis in her position with Moorehouse. Wagner writes, "As the various plot lines of the trilogy show, once a character lost his or her sense of individual purpose and became a cog in the wheel of large industry—whether as a secretary or chairman of the board—life became a series of automatic responses, leading finally to many kinds of dissatisfactions, among them emotional bankruptcy" (98). This description of what happens to many of the characters aptly applies to Janey as we see her become a cog in the wheel of Moorehouse's public relations machine. Interestingly, she not

only loses her identity, but throughout her story she suffers a loss of her own voice. In feminist terms, Bordo writes, “Loss of mobility, loss of voice, inability to leave the home, feeding others while starving oneself, taking up space, and whittling down the space one’s body takes up—all have symbolic meaning, all have political meaning under the varying rules governing the historical construction of gender” (168). Clearly Janey’s loss of identity and voice have something to do with her stagnancy as a character. She loses all agency and all significance in time through her willing stagnancy.

Although I am focusing on *1919* for this thesis, a brief look back at *The 42nd Parallel* is necessary to understanding Janey’s character development. In *1919* she occupies no chapters of her own; rather, she is relegated to the chapters of other major characters including her brother Joe Williams, Eveline Hutchins, and Dick Savage. The fact that her title chapters are found in *The 42nd Parallel* reveals that her movement as a character has diminished by *1919*. She is a much more quiet character in the second book of the trilogy. She makes no waves, and she exists in the shadow of others’ lives. In *The 42nd Parallel* she is much more self-sufficient by way of finding employment for herself and continuing to better her station in life.

As much as Janey is the most static character being discussed, she does exhibit some traits of restlessness and progressiveness in *The 42nd Parallel* that show her regression into a static character in *1919*. This tension in her character makes her more complex, but she ultimately succumbs to a much less interesting and mobile version of herself. One example of her movement is her embrace of the new possibilities for women in the workforce: “She realized now that she was good at her work and that she could support herself whatever happened” (166). She defends her working out in the world by telling her mother how interesting it is. Mommer responds by telling her daughter that in her day working for a living was considered unladylike

and demeaning: “‘But it isn’t now,’ Janey would say, getting into a temper” (165). She feels passionately that the day for women to have new opportunities has arrived. In some ways, the opportunity to work for a living puts her closer to the level of men, a place she has longed for since childhood. Further exemplifying this connection is a passage that shows Janey’s desire to get outside of the town that she knows, to get out into the world and to do something: “She began to feel that there was a great throbbing arclighted world somewhere outside and that only living in Georgetown where everything was so poky and oldfashioned, and Mommer and Popper were so poky and oldfashioned, kept her from breaking into it” (166). She tests the waters of a new kind of womanhood for herself after her father dies. It is perhaps Popper’s absence from her life that gives her the freedom to break from the traditional feminine role she always felt her father wanted her to embody.

Despite her movement in *The 42nd Parallel*, culminating in a promising job with Moorehouse, Janey is still operating only on the fringes of the world of men. As a secretary and stenographer, she is as close as she can be to the work reserved for men only. She does not seem to realize however that she is outside of the history being made, rather than a part of its creation: “The work at the office was so interesting. It put her right in the midst of the headlines like when she used to talk to Jerry Burnham back at Dreyfus and Carroll’s” (341). She may think that she is “in the midst of headlines,” but she is actually only an observer, living vicariously through Moorehouse. she is closer to the events than perhaps many women, but she still exists on the periphery of history in the way that she understands it.

Another example of Janey’s existence outside of history is her limited understanding of world events. Often she thinks of the “poor soldiers in the trenches.”

Janey finally said that it was a shame the weather was so mean and that it must be terrible for the poor soldiers in the trenches and she thought the Huns were just

too barbarous and the Lusitania and how silly the Ford peace ship idea was. . . . Janey went on to talk about the war and how she wished we were in it to save civilization and poor little helpless Belgium. (350)

Her talk about the war to her brother shows that she only understands the world through headlines. Joe is quick to point out to her that she does not know that she is talking about: ““Can that stuff, Janey. . . . You people don’t understand it, see . . . The whole damn war’s crooked from start to finish. . . . I’m tellin’ ye, Janey, this war’s crooked, like every other goddam thing”” (350). While Joe has chosen to desert, he has at least actively participated in history, whereas she only knows news from afar. She symbolizes the women of her time who sympathized with Belgium, saw the Germans as barbaric, and worried over the “poor soldiers.” Although many women perhaps did feel this way, flesh and blood women of the actual world have a complexity of nature that is not revealed in these characters. Janey’s character has been reduced to a consumer of clichés.

By *1919*, Janey has solidified into a cold, static figure. She occupies a symbolic space in the novel, that of the new working woman, cautious and conservative. She is almost asexual, and she judges other women’s promiscuity scornfully. She is trusted by her employer, and she remains a stable character throughout the novel. She actually occupies very little textual space in the novel, making her utterly silent. She appears in her brother Joe’s chapters, and we learn about her through other character’s perceptions of her. I have already noted that Janey operates on the fringes of history by existing in a liminal position between the male and female worlds, but in this novel, she moves further away from history to even the fringes of fiction. Throughout *1919*, her characterization builds toward a picture of a humorless, emotionally-stale secretary and nothing more.

The first information we get about Janey in the second book of the trilogy reveals the changes in her character from *The 42nd Parallel*. Her brother Joe hears from his mother that “Janey was doing well in her work, but that living in New York had changed her” (130). Based on this passage, we can expect that her character in *1919* will be a very different one than the one we met in *The 42nd Parallel*. In his novel she proves to be less mobile, more stable, and more silent. Evidence of her blending into the sea of women is Joe’s first dinner experience with her in New York: “He took Janey out to supper and to a show, but she talked just like everybody else did and bawled him out for cussing and he didn’t have a very good time” (133). She sounds like “everybody else” because she has ceased to be an individual. She is a symbol of consumerism and of clichés. She regurgitates propaganda and headlines. As Wagner points out, “Like many Americans, Janey is the dupe of cultural propaganda and ends, fittingly, working zealously for the master of American public relations, J. Ward Moorehouse” (96). Even in her job choices, she is a product of the society around her, telling her what to think and who to be. This is evident in her choice to leave Dreyfus and Carroll due to the fear of their being pro-German. In this way, she becomes a symbol of consumer-media culture and of the ignorance of women when it comes to historical significance of events.

She appears again one hundred pages later in one of Eveline’s chapters, and the way she is referred to reveals the self-erasure she is experiencing. She is only referred to as Moorehouse’s “blonde secretary Miss Williams” (236). Janey’s identity, to anyone other than her brother, is connected to Moorehouse. She is only identified by her hair color and profession, leaving an impression of a type of woman, rather than a picture of the actual woman herself. Again, in Eveline’s same chapter, she is only referred to in reference to Moorehouse while at an opera: “Miss Williams, J.W.’s secretary, was already in the box. Eveline thought how nice he must be

to work for, and for a moment bitterly envied Miss Williams, even to her peroxide hair and her chilly brisk manner of talking” (240). Janey is still reduced to her position in a box—in more ways than one—and her hair, but this passage also refers to her “chilly-ness.” She is more of an individual person in this passage and less of a shadow, but only barely. We also learn later in this episode that she does not venture out into the social world with the group after the opera is over. He plays it safe and returns home. Interestingly in this passage, she is described as being “in a box.” While this reference is obviously to the opera box in which she sits, Janey makes her living works in a kind of box, figuratively speaking, as she has but one duty: to serve Moorehouse as his personal secretary. By having no education outside of stenography and no other marketable skills, she is “boxed in” in terms of her career options. Finding herself so limited, her stagnancy and utter self-erasure by the end of *1919* is not surprising.

Janey’s chilly nature is evident in several places in as she interacts with other women. We see Janey’s cold judgment poured out passive-aggressively on Eveline when she must interact with her at Moorehouse’s office. After Eveline sleeps with him, she comes to his office for a visit and is met with Janey’s chill: “She stared Eveline right in the face with such cold hostile eyes that Eveline immediately thought she must know something. She said Mr. Moorehouse had a bad cold and fever and wasn’t seeing anybody” (252). The chill in her character becomes more pronounced when Eveline points out the gold star pin that she wears. Janey must acknowledge that she has lost someone in the war, and she shuts down emotionally: “Miss Williams’s face got more chilly and pinched than ever. She seemed to be fumbling for something to say, ‘Er . . . my brother was in the navy,’ she said and walked over to her desk where she started typing very fast” (253). This is behavior we have seen her Janey before. She is at a loss for words. She refuses to let anyone in emotionally, and she becomes almost speechless.

Janey cannot separate herself from Moorehouse in order to see how utterly insignificant her life has become. When in *The 42nd Parallel* she saw herself as part of history through the headlines at Dreyfus and Carroll, similarly she sees herself as more important perhaps in the grand scheme of things than she is. For example, she speaks for Moorehouse and seems to get satisfaction out of doing so. She says to Eveline at her visit to the office:

‘It’s most unfortunate, Miss Hutchins, that Mr. Moorehouse should have gotten his cold at this moment. We have a number of important matters pending. And the way things are at the Peace Conference the situation changes every minute so that constant watchfulness is necessary . . . We think it is a very important moment from every point of view . . . Too bad Mr. Moorehouse should get laid up just now. We feel very badly about it, all of us. He feels just terribly about it.’ (252-3)

Her use of the word “we” indicates her inability to separate herself from Moorehouse. She even speaks as if she were somehow a part of the Peace Conference. Having no personality outside of her cool demeanor, only thing she is known for is being Moorehouse’s secretary.

On another occasion when Eveline goes to visit Moorehouse, Janey is there almost as a part of the scenery, marking her gradual self-erasure in the novel: “Everything was as usual there, Miss Williams looking chilly and yellow haired at her desk . . .” (260). She is reduced to a chilly, yellow haired woman at a desk- the secretary, judging all of the comings and goings of Moorehouse’s visitors. She reveals more of her character when she says to Eveline, “‘It’s better to be busy,’ she said, ‘It keeps a person out of mischief . . . It seems to me that in Paris they waste a great deal of time . . . I never imagined that there could be a place where people could sit around idle so much of the time” (260). She stays busy to keep herself out of trouble. Rather than be seen as a loose, progressive, or idle woman, Janey stays busy, but conservative so that she remains stagnant.

The last scene of *1919* in which Janey appears solidifies her halted movement as she is reduced to simply being a secretary. This scene occurs when Eleanor introduces Dick Savage to

Moorehouse: “In the vestibule of Mr. Moorehouse’s suite, she introduced him to Miss Williams, the tiredlooking sharpfaced blonde who was his secretary. ‘She’s a treasure,’ Miss Stoddard whispered as they went through into the drawingroom, ‘does more work than anybody in the place’” (305). Again, Janey is defined by her relationship to Moorehouse. She is tired, cold, blonde, and busy. The description “tiredlooking” works well to show Janey’s aging and that time is having an effect on her, even if she does not realize it. Because of her lethargy, she is no longer able to move in the way that she did in *The 42nd Parallel*. Fatigue is obviously causing a decline into stasis. This cessation of movement and growth sharply contrasts with the futuristic ideals that seem to move Daughter forward. If her character was influenced, at least abstractly, by the Futurist movement, then Janey is the contrasting character. She is part of the public relations machine that Moorehouse is creating, and she has no identity apart from him.

Eleanor Stoddard, though a professional, struggles in much the same manner. Like Janey, she has no complete chapters devoted to her character in *1919* and thus appears only in the chapters of others, primarily her only friend Eveline Hutchins. Eleanor is first introduced in *The 42nd Parallel* with several chapters of her own, and her character development from the first to the second novel reveals her digression to a static character. As time is speeding up in *1919*, her character is actually becoming more static. She loses momentum in *1919* as she settles into a chiseled, cold, and calculated woman. Closely aligning with Janey in her coldness and in her relationship with J. Ward Moorehouse, Eleanor is “more sophisticated than Janey but equally enmeshed in the cultural system that Moorehouse represents” (160). Nanney also acknowledges a connection between the two women based on their connection to him: “The stories of the other two central characters of *The 42nd Parallel*—Janey Williams and Eleanor Stoddard—intersect more traditionally and integrally with the Moorehouse narrative” (180). Eleanor symbolizes

propriety and stoicism, a business-savvy working woman of the early twentieth century who alienates herself from sexuality and from deep friendships with women. She has the appearance of success, but she remains alone and empty. She comes to be defined in statuesque terms over the course of the two novels, marking her as a static, immovable symbol.

While the portrayal of her character is best described in *1919* through the eyes of others, a brief look at *The 42nd Parallel* helps to solidify her characterization. Throughout her story, Eleanor grows from someone who is insecure and driven to reach a state of independence to a woman who is perhaps successful but who becomes cold and unbearable. She does not embody gentle femininity but rather asexual bitterness. She symbolizes the woman who sacrifices relationships for her career. She is business-savvy and unharmed by emotional damages in relationships, but her safety comes at a price. She cuts off her emotions until all that is left of her is a bitter shell, an effigy. A history of the New Woman reveals that “[w]henver a single woman was portrayed, no matter what the nature of the text, the writer invariably described a deviation from the feminine ideal as defined by law, by a certain concept of love, by biological determinism, and by a code of female beauty” (Fraisie and Perrot 442). This negative portrayal of Janey shows Dos Passos’s concern with her deviation from femininity insofar that she has little concern for beauty or love. Perhaps Dos Passos was uncomfortable with the idea of the potential power of the New Woman and so sought to make her unattractive, not knowing what else to do with her: “It was as if single women somehow crystalized all the fears of women’s autonomy—sexual, social, economic, and intellectual” (442). This rationale makes sense consider that Dos Passos makes Janey asexual, anti-social, and shallow in her discourse.

Not surprisingly, Eleanor is introduced in *The 42nd Parallel* in relationship to her father, as all of the female characters discussed thus far have been, and this relationship reveals the

extent to which Eleanor longs for autonomy. She hates her father, whom she associates with the stockyards and all of the sights and smells that go with it, and she later only speaks to him when she becomes desperate for money. Occasionally she “would have to go by to see her father and get a couple of dollars from him. He gave it to her gladly enough, but somehow that made her hate him more than ever” (*The 42nd Parallel* 229). Eleanor seems to despise having to rely on her father more than she really despises him personally. In a world where women are becoming more and more independent, the cause of her hatred is apparent. She is equally frustrated with her boss Mr. Lang at Marshall Fields, who encourages her to rely on men when she asks for a raise by saying, “Why you’ll be marrying soon and leaving me dear; a girl with your style, indefinable chic can’t stay single long, and then you won’t need it” (*The 42nd Parallel* 229). Eleanor wants to be autonomous—a state she will never reach as her design business is initially funded by a man, and her career decision to join the Red Cross is prompted by Moorehouse.

Although she is a primarily static character, Eleanor does share some characteristics with Daughter and with the young Janey in terms of restlessness in the first book of *U.S.A.* From *The 42nd Parallel* we see,

Her room at the Ivanhoe seemed small and sordid and the smell of cooking that came up through the window and the greasemell of the old elevator. Several days she called up that she was sick and then found that she couldn’t stay in her room and roamed about the city going to ships and movingpicture shows and then getting suddenly dead tired and having to come home in a taxi that she couldn’t afford. (*The 42nd Parallel* 249)

This passage shows a manic side of Eleanor that we have seen in both Daughter and young Janey and will continue to see in Eveline. It seems that all of the women, no matter what speed of movement results in their utter self-erasure all experience periods of restlessness, perhaps rebelling against the stasis of femininity. For Daughter, her manic movement destroys her both

emotionally and physically, while Janey's stasis reduces her to a job description fit for a silent woman. Eleanor's static role leaves her without an identity at all after *1919*.

Eleanor's talent for interior decorating at Marshall Fields has proven to be a profitable career for her—and one that she will carry into *1919* in business with Eveline—but she still longs for autonomy and a chance to make a living under her own authority. The thought of working at Marshall Fields for the rest of her life is discouraging:

It seemed to Eleanor as if she'd spend the rest of her life furnishing other people's new drawingrooms and diningrooms, matching curtains and samples of upholstery and wallpaper, smoothing down indignant women customers who'd been sent an Oriental china dog instead of an inlaid teak teatable or who even after they'd chosen it themselves weren't satisfied with the pattern on that cretonne. (*The 42nd Parallel* 248)

Even in her choice to go into business with Eveline, she maintains much of the traditional role ascribed to women, that of goddess of the home. Her career choice itself reflects domesticity, and even though she moves forward in life, she still moves within a very traditional sphere.

Furthermore, she does not manage her own money as she puts the profits from her business into the care of Moorehouse, her financial advisor.

While Eleanor does not have her own chapters in *1919*, she does maintain a significant presence in the novel. Like Janey, she is depicted as less likable and colder than she was in the first book of the trilogy. Seen from the perspective of others, she loses her complexity of identity and is reduced to a personality type just as Janey is reduced to a job title. She is first described as “rather trying on the whole,” (*1919* 44). Eveline also points out early on that she is judgmental and conservative: “Eleanor kept complaining that the young men Eveline collected were all so poor and certainly more of a liability than an asset to the business” (*1919* 95). Eveline knows that Eleanor disapproves of her behavior when she thinks “how shocked Eleanor would be if she knew about it,” her being alone in a hotel room with a man that is (*1919* 95).

Eleanor is preoccupied with her outward appearance and status. She makes sure that her house looks expensive and elegant, and “her hair was carefully done and she had on a pink satin dressing gown with lace and ermine on it. . . . She said she was on the edge of becoming a theatrical producer and spoke about ‘my financial adviser’ this and that” (1919 100). She puts on airs to make herself seem important, but in the larger picture of 1919 as a whole, she is utterly insignificant and makes no moves that matter. She participates in the war efforts through the Red Cross, but she only joins in *The 42nd Parallel* after hearing Moorehouse commit himself to the war. She follows his lead and does nothing of significance on her own. This is ironic considering that what Eleanor seems to want more than anything is autonomy.

Like Janey, she is also a product of media consumerism. She allows the propaganda of war to determine her attitude about war. Actually, she seems to follow Moorehouse’s lead in sympathy for the war, which is appropriate considering that his profession is public relations. Like Daughter, Eleanor measures her life against the significance of the soldier’s sacrifices and feels that she must make her life count for something. She actually scolds Eveline for not having the same attitude by saying that “their life was getting much too bohemian and that it wasn’t right with the war on and things going so dreadfully in Italy and Russia and the poor boys in the trenches and all that” (1919 173). Her language is very similar to Janey’s and to Daughter’s in talking about the soldiers and the war in general. Although she gets her hands dirty a bit more volunteering with the Red Cross, she only does so because of her submission to Moorehouse’s ideals.

Once in Europe, we begin to see how much control Moorehouse has over Eleanor. She begins to be concerned about her appearance once he arrives, but she seems to take pains to make herself appealing not out of sexual interest but out of ambition: “The morning he arrived

the first thing Eveline noticed was that Eleanor had had her hair curled” (1919 174). The next geographical move Eleanor makes is to Rome, to be where Moorehouse is, after she receives a somewhat mysterious order to appear at the Red Cross there. Reading between the lines, it seems that Eleanor’s attention to beauty paid off, not sexually, but professionally.

Just as her relationship with Moorehouse will never progress to true intimacy, Eleanor’s friendship with Eveline will always be stunted because she cannot allow herself to become close to anyone: “It was during that trip that Eveline began to notice for the first time something cool in Eleanor’s manner that hurt her; they’d been such good friend he first week Eleanor had gotten back from Rome” (1919 179). She treats Eveline with condescension and is not able to let her guard down. For example, “She and Eleanor treated each other with a stiff nervous sarcasm now” (1919 243). When Eveline wants to pursue a relationship with Moorehouse, she feels Eleanor’s searching eyes on them at all times, as if she is ready to ruin anything what might grow between them: “She wanted to know him better; Eleanor, she felt, watched them like a cat watching a mouse. After all, Eveline kept saying to herself, she hadn’t any right” (1919 236). Eleanor also judges Daughter hastily, even when she does not know anything about her, and she never makes any real friendships with any women. At best, she and Janey tolerate each other politely.

Throughout 1919, Eleanor is described as pale, cold, and statuesque. Her statue-like descriptions reveal immobility in the sense that statues are permanent figures, chiseled and erected to stand for or to symbolize an ideal. For all of her professional and personal development in *The 42nd Parallel*, by 1919 she has composed herself into the woman she wants to be and is not looking to change. From this perspective, Eleanor is absolutely a symbol representing stoicism, asexuality, and professional success for a woman. Instances of language

used to describe her in such a way are plentiful. For example, Daughter sees Eleanor simply as “the pale woman” (1919 328). This paleness evokes the image of ancient Greek statues carved out of marble. Daughter also notices her “quick inquisitive stare and that made her feel terrible” (1919 329). But Eleanor is not only cold to Daughter who is an utter stranger to her, she is even cold to her only friend Eveline. She “looked cool and lilylike as she had when she was listening to Maurice tell about the young Christ of the gas attack. Can’t ever tell what she’s thinking, though, said Eveline to herself” (1919 174). Eveline notices that Eleanor is impenetrable, cool, and fair. The “lilylike” face has a statuesque quality, like the paleness that Daughter notices. At another time Eleanor is described this way: “Her face had its accustomed look of finely chiseled calm” (1919 175). Again is described as “chilly”: “She looked handsome this evening, in her hard chilly way” (1919 240). Even her mannerisms are cold as she has a “chilly little voice” (1919 245). When Eveline finds that Moorehouse has slept over at Eleanor’s place, Eleanor remains completely put together. Her face appeared “cool and white and collected” (1919 255). These passages most clearly reveal Eleanor as an effigy, as she seems to almost be devoid of feeling or life.

Even Dick Savage, who seems to have a somewhat flirtatious relationship with Eleanor, notices her cool demeanor: “Dick noticed at once from the way Miss Stoddard walked into the room and the way Mr. Moorehouse came forward a little to meet her, that she was used to running the show in that room” (1919 305). In this same chapter of Dick’s, Eleanor’s voice is described as “cool and probing like a dentists tool” (1919 312). Her profile seems to him to be “coldly chiseled,” (1919 313), and even the entrance to her home is made up of “chilly stone stairs” (311). Everything about Eleanor’s demeanor and even her home are cold and uninviting.

Janey and Eleanor are both working women with some shared experiences, and as Nanney points out, “Both women illustrate how business and the seductions of material success in America can transform people whose natures are initially open to genuine feelings and relationships into mechanical beings who repress and ultimately lost their natural impulses to love” (181). Both women show promise in *The 42nd Parallel* of becoming women who are active participants in making history. They both feel the urge to do something of significance with their lives, but neither of them do. This seems to be more a shortcoming of Dos Passos’s than of actual historical women. In a world that was just beginning to blur the either/or options for women as either productive or reproductive members of society, neither Janey nor Eleanor seem to be able to choose both. They lack the ability to have deep, meaningful relationships with others, especially sexually and therefore choose a life of work. They symbolize the real limitations women must have felt during the years surrounding War World I, especially before women were given the right to vote. Both women become cold and stagnant, antithesis to the nurturing mother and wife roles that they reject. Their choice for careers is equally limiting for them emotionally as they cease moving and growing with the world around them as is ultimately seen in their erasure from the trilogy in *The Big Money*.

CHAPTER IV

REJECTION OF SYMBOLISM AND STASIS: EVELINE HUTCHINS

In *Daughter's* character, Dos Passos gives us a picture of speed to excess. In *Janey* we see stagnation in a woman who started out with promise of upward mobility, and in *Eleanor* the novel gives us a chiseled woman who has solidified into a cold, asexual woman. But with *Eveline*, Dos Passos creates a woman who refuses to be categorized. She is sexual but does not symbolize sexuality. She is geographically mobile but does not symbolize mobility. She is an American beauty in Paris, but she refuses to symbolize American heroism. *Eveline* participates in and is aware of history and time moving around her. For these reasons, she resonates as the most "successful" character, one who actively lives inside in the world of *1919* rather than one who is unwittingly moved about by circumstances beyond her control. Throughout her life, *Eveline's* awareness of herself becomes more pronounced, which allows her more freedom of movement and the ability to reject stifling labels placed on her. In the end, however, *Eveline* does accept the role of wife and mother, and this acceptance shows that ultimately, speed and movement for women at the turn of the century was limited.

Scholars have missed subtle complexities of *Eveline's* character. According to Casey, she is "saturated by the idioms of mass culture," "self-centered," and "shallow" (155). Casey cites the passage in which *Eveline* laments the loss of her first love, begins to wear her hair in a low messy knot, begins her friendship with *Eleanor*, and considers her life now built on a "beautiful friendship" instead of romantic devotion (155). She argues that the effect of *Eveline's* "trite

paraphrasing and prattling narration” becomes tiresome to the reader because her limitations as a character are marked by her limited discourse (155-6). She also asserts that “Eveline despite her efforts to the contrary, lives a life that is empty of significant force and meaning” (162). This is where Casey’s reading of Eveline is a bit shallow. When Eveline is younger her discourse is limited, but as her understanding of the world broadens with the war in Europe, so does her discourse, as I will show in this chapter. Eveline’s life may not hold the “significant force and meaning” that some of the men’s lives do, *if* they do, but she is at least aware of herself and of her position in the world around her.

Eveline, whose very name evokes the figure of Eve, is born into symbolism. One of the first experiences related in *1919* portrays her as the discoverer of nakedness and of sexual difference between herself and her brother. This moment brings shame upon young Eveline:

When Dearmother let Eveline help bathe him because Miss Mathilda was having the measles too Eveline noticed he had something funny there where she didn’t have anything. She asked Dearmother if it was a mump, but Dearmother scolded her and said she was a vulgar little girl to have looked. . . . Eveline got red all over and cried and Adelaide and Margaret wouldn’t speak to her for days on account of her being a vulgar little girl. (*1919* 84)

Eveline learns that the body is not something to be talked about publicly because of its vulgarity, but she does not retain the shame of Eve in discovering sin. Later in life Eveline seems to have few qualms about her body. She does not allow the experience to shape her identity unlike Janey and Eleanor who experience anxiety about the body and then become utterly asexual in adulthood.

Eveline rejects the symbol of Eve in the way that she handles shame about her womanhood. Whereas Eve’s curse was in childbearing, and her sin resulted in death, Eveline is able to overcome the shame of her menstruations, and ultimately decides not to kill herself over them:

She didn't feel well most of the time and would drop into long successions of horrid thoughts about people's bodies that made her feel nauseated. Adelaide and Margaret told her what to do about her trouble every month but she didn't tell them how horrid it made her feel inside. She read the Bible and looked up 'uterus' and words like that in the encyclopedias and dictionaries. Then one night she decided she wouldn't read stand it any more and went through the medicine chest in the bathroom till she found a bottle marked POISON that has some kind of laudanum compound in it. But she wanted to write a poem before she died, she felt so lovely musically traurig about dying, but she couldn't seem to get the rhymes rights and finally went to sleep with her head on the paper. . . . Anyway, she promised herself that she'd keep the bottle and kill herself whenever things seemed too filthy and horrid. That made her feel better. (1919 88)

She chooses life over death, and escapes the shame of the curse of Eve. Evidence that she overcomes this anxiety is seen through her string of love affairs later in life. Her early "Eve" experiences do not hold her back from moving forward and maturing, unlike Janey and Eleanor who seem to stagnate sexually due to childhood and adolescent experiences. In one significant way, however, Eveline is like Eve. Through her, sin entered into the Garden of Eden, bringing with it aging and death. The association of Eve with time reinforces the idea that Eveline will be aware of time itself and her place in it.

As a young girl, Eveline's preoccupations are with art and beauty, which almost make her into a symbol of traditional femininity itself. For example, she wants to be like Elaine the Fair of Arthurian legend: "All that winter Adelaide and Margaret were King Arthur and Queen Whenever. Eveline wanted to be Elaine the Fair, but Adelaide said she couldn't because her hair was mousy and she had a face like a pie, so she had to be the Maiden Evelina" (1919 84). The first oil painting she did was of Elaine the Fair because for Eveline, Elaine is a symbol of beauty, one she wishes to imitate as a child. Warned not to make so much of appearance, Miss Mathilda, her nanny, tells Eveline, "Look at yourself too much and you'll find you're looking at the devil" (1919 85). It is perhaps this moment that teaches Eveline that vanity is an evil and that idolizing a symbol of beauty is dangerous.

Sally Emerson, Eveline's mentor who introduces her to art and culture, comes closest to making her a symbol, but Eveline ultimately rejects it. After being invited to Mrs. Emerson's house for the first time, Eveline comes alive as a new world opens up to her: "Eveline went home with her head reeling with names and pictures, little snatches out of operas and in her nose the tickling smell of the freezias mixed with toasted cheese and cigarettesmoke" (1919 87). She cultivates Eveline's natural talents by investing in her artistically and socially. She symbolizes Eveline as the aesthetic savior of her generation, the one who will rise up and carry "Art" forward. A scene at a community dance, however, reveals that Eveline does not wish to be the symbol into which she is being made: "Sally Emerson took her hand and said: 'But Eveline, you mustn't forget that we have high hopes of you'" (1919 92). Eveline rejects this stagnant position—despite making Mrs. Emerson into a symbol herself—in favor of speed and movement, quite literally:

And while she was dancing everything that Sally Emerson stood for and how wonderful she used to think her came sweeping through Eveline's head; but driving home with Dirk all these thoughts were dazzled out of her in the glare of his headlights, the strong leap forward of the car on the pickup, the purr of the motor, his arm around her, the great force pressing her against him when they went around the curves. (1919 92)

For Eveline, speed trumps symbolism. She rejects both the symbolism of Mrs. Emerson and of herself. Movement means more to her than abstract ideals anymore. While she does still care about art, she seems to care more about living in the moment. Like Daughter's experience, this speed and movement comes at a price, however. After the dance, she survives a car crash: "Eveline never knew where exactly it was they smashed up, only that she was crawling out from under the seat and that her dress was ruined and she wasn't hurt only the rain was streaking the headlights of the cars that stopped along the road on either side of them" (1919 92). Because this event happens early enough in her life, it is quite plausible that she learns to slow down before

crashing. She does engage in risky behaviors from time to time later in life, but she pulls back before self-destruction.

Throughout her life Eveline rejects stereotypical roles of the domestic woman. The first instance of this rejection is seen in her move from Chicago to Santa Fe to take care for her parents who are ill. She abhors the domesticity that she is thrust into. She calls this year her “unhappy year” (1919 96): “She went around the house ordering meals, attending to housekeeping, irritated by the stupidity of servantgirls, making hour laundry lists” (1919 96). Eveline never wants to fulfill the role of caretaker of the home. Her loathing of domesticity is seen in her first true love affair, although its materialization is much more subtle. Once she has become sexually active, what seems to give Eveline the most anxiety is the idea of becoming pregnant. At one point, she is convinced in her own mind that she is: “Eveline was terrified to find she’d lost control of her own self; it was like going under ether” (1919 97). The risk of becoming a mother means losing control of herself. Because of this overwhelming sense of impending limitation, added to her current role as caretaker of her parents, “[s]he felt half crazy until she got on the train to go back east. . . . The night she left she lay awake in her lower berth tremendously happy in the roar of the air and the swift pound of the wheels on the rails” (1919 99). Once she is on the move again, away from domesticity, Eveline is content.

Finally, moving to New York to pursue a career in the decorative arts and costuming, Eveline begins to reveal her awareness of herself and the world around her in a way that other characters fail to do. For example, when war is declared in America, Eveline sees other people being swept away by excitement while she remains calmly aware of herself:

That spring was full of plans for shows and decorating houses with Eleanor and Freddy, but nothing came of them, and after a while Eveline couldn’t keep her mind on New York, what with war declared, and the streets filling with flags and uniforms, and everybody going patriotic crazy around her and seeing spies and

pacifists under every bed. Eleanor was getting herself a job in the Red Cross. Don Stevens had signed up with the Friends' Relief, Freddy announced a new decision every day, but finally said he wouldn't decide what to do till he was called for the draft. Adelaide's husband had a job in Washington in the new Shipping Board. Dad was writing her every few days that Wilson was the greatest president since Lincoln. Some days she felt that she must be losing her mind, people around her seemed so cracked. (1919 102)

While someone like Eleanor falls into war efforts by the promising rhetoric of Moorehouse, Eveline seems to know exactly what she is doing in joining the Red Cross rather than being carried away emotionally on the war bandwagon. This passage also poignantly reveals Eveline's hyper-awareness of the effects of history on those around her. Even if she does not yet know her place in the events, she is at least cognizant of her cultural and temporal surroundings. Furthermore, the attention to time of year is significant in that Eveline's inability to keep her mind on her work occurs during the spring. This connection with the seasons connects her more concretely to the passage of time.

By the time Eveline gets to Europe with the Red Cross, she has matured into a woman who clearly sees history in motion all around her, making her more a part of it than the other women who seem to be oblivious. While she is in Paris, the novel gives us accounts of her first-hand experiences of war. In contrast to Janey, Daughter, and Eleanor, she sees the shrapnel, hears the planes overhead, and encounters gendarmes: "At night she could hear the gigantic surf of the guns in continuous barrage on the crumbling front" (1919 177). We do not get this kind of account for any of the other female characters. Eveline is aware not only of the war going on around her but also of the other people:

She came out on a boulevard at last where there were men and women strolling, voices and an occasional automobile with blue lights running silently over the asphalt. Suddenly the nightmare scream of a siren started up in the distance, then another and another. Somewhere lost in the sky was a faint humming like a bee, louder then fainter, then louder again. Eveline looked at the people around her. Nobody seemed alarmed or to hurry their strolling pace. (1919 105)

She notices that no one seems alarmed, and she begins to interpret the events in her own artistic way: “Les avions . . . les boches . . .” she heard people saying in unstartled tones. She found herself standing at the curb staring up into the milky sky that was fast becoming rayed with searchlights. . . . The sky began to sparkle like with mica” (1919 106). Eveline understands these events in a way that reveals her individuality. She notices that the sky sparkles like mica and that the wings of Boche planes look like “tiny silver dragonflies” (1919 107). She does not regurgitate the clips and phrases of the media like Janey and Eleanor do. Eveline sees through the media’s outpouring of trite war-isms, and is not affected by propaganda in the way that they are. She sees the war through her own eyes. Even in Moorhouse’s speech when he says, “Even at this moment, my friends, we are all under fire, ready to make the supreme sacrifice that civilization shall not perish from the earth,” Eveline only feels moved “in spite of herself” (1919 174).

In more serious circumstances, Eveline encounters people who have experienced the devastating effects of the war, and she is forced to come to terms with her place in the world. The concierge at Eveline’s apartment in Paris has a son who has been killed. With the end of the war announced, Eveline must face the reality that all the deaths have not necessarily been justified: “When they got to her apartment the old concierge hobbled out from her box and shook hands with both of them. ‘Ah madame, c’est la victoire,’ she said, ‘but it won’t make my dead son some back to life will it?’” (1919 235) Although she does not answer it, this question situates her in a reality that Janey, Daughter, and Eleanor cannot fathom. Eveline relates her position to Jerry Burnham, acknowledging her limited understanding of the war when she says, “I understand, Jerry, you’ve seen things that I haven’t imagined . . . I guess it’s the corrupting influence of the Red Cross” (1919 238). Rather than imagining herself to be a part of the war,

Eveline acknowledges her place outside of the history being made. This acknowledgement on her part already sets her apart from the other female characters. For example, whereas Janey's image of herself is conflated with Moorehouse, making her delusional about her level of actual involvement in the events of the war, Eveline humbly acknowledges her limited understanding and participation.

Whereas Moorehouse seems to see this time as a grand opportunity for personal success, Eveline sees the war as part of the larger picture of human history: "But Eveline said what could be more exciting than to be in Paris right now with all the map of Europe being remade right under their noses, and J.W. said perhaps she was right" (1919 242). During an intimate conversation when the two are alone together after traveling with Eleanor, she says in a moment of refreshing clarity, "'After all, J.W., the war was terrible,' said Eveline. 'But it's a great time to be alive. Things are happening at last'" (1919 250). Eveline is actually more interested in talking about history "off the clock" than Moorehouse is. For example, "At supper Eveline tried to get him talking about the peace conference, but he said, 'Why talk shop, we'll be back there soon enough, why not talk about ourselves and each other'" (1919 252). Eveline is excited to be witnessing history, whereas Moorehouse seems to simply be interested in exploiting it.

Once war is declared to be over, Eveline fights against symbolism more than ever as the people around her want to idolize her as the heroic American. Moving through the excitement of the crowd in a blur,

A minute later she realized she'd lost the car and her friends and was scared. She couldn't recognize the streets even, in this new Paris full of arclights and flags and bands and drunken people. She found herself dancing with the little sailor in the asphalt square in front of a church with two towers then with a French colonial officer in a red cloak, then with a Polish legionnaire who spoke a little English and had lived in Newark, New Jersey, and then suddenly some young French soldiers were dancing in a ring around her until she began to feel scared. Her head was beginning to whirl around when she caught sight of an American uniform on

the outskirts of the crowd. She broke through the ring bowling over a little fat Frenchman and fell on the dougboy's neck and kissed him, and everybody laughed and cheered and cried encore. (1919 234)

The dizzying reel of men whom Eveline dances with are a snapshot of her life, and suddenly strangers dancing around her in ritualistic fashion surround her. With the war declared to be over, Eveline is idolized as an American. She is the golden calf to be worshiped. Even when she breaks free of the circle, as she continues to walk with an American soldier, "Now and then they'd be stopped by a ring of people dancing around her" (1919 254). The crowd tries relentlessly to make Eveline a symbol of American heroism, but she is insistent on avoiding it.

As she is faced with the choice of returning to America after the war or continuing on in Europe, Eveline chooses a forward trajectory, refusing to go back both literally and figuratively. Like the futurist ideology with which Daughter's character unknowingly aligns, this same significance of the future over the past defines Eveline's character. For example, "Eveline began to think of going home to America, but the thought of going back to Santa Fe or to any kind of life she'd lived before was hideous to her" (1919 253), and "She didn't want to do anything she'd done before, she knew that" (1919 261). Eveline's desire is to move forward and to continue to have new experiences. For her, the past holds little promise of the future. In talking with Freddy Seargeant after the war, Eveline experiences disappointment that their usual topics of conversation no longer give her pleasure. "Eveline was delighted to see him, but after she'd been with him all afternoon she began to feel that the old talk about the theater and decoration and pattern and color and form didn't mean much to her any more" (1919 254). She, like Daughter, chooses continual forward movement. But unlike Daughter, Eveline's progression is done so at a slower pace. Without making impulsive decisions, Eveline has clearly thought

through her choices, something Daughter never does. Because of Eveline's more cautious speed of movement, her life is prolonged into *The Big Money*.

Choosing to move forward, Eveline begins to become more aware of herself in time as she ages and becomes pregnant: "Eveline looked at herself in the mirror before she started dressing. She had shadows under her eyes and faint beginnings of crowsfeet. Chillier than the damp Paris room came the thought of growing old. It was so horribly actual that she suddenly burst into tears. . . . 'Oh, I lead such a silly life,' she whispered aloud" (1919 257). Eveline is aware of the effect of time on her body, but she is also acutely aware that the events of her life, in the context of time itself, mean very little. When she compares her life to the history she is living through, it seems "silly." Eveline is the only character who seems to possess this type of self-awareness. Being pregnant also makes Eveline hyper-aware of her placement in time. A passage alluding to Father Time links her pregnancy to the passage of time in way that puts Eveline's life into perspective in terms of her age and movement through life: "The Seine flowed fast streaked with green and lilac in the afternoon light, brimming the low banks bordered by ranks of huge poplars. They crossed a little ferry rowed by an old man that Eveline called Father Time. Halfway over she said to Paul, 'Do you know what's the matter with me, Paul? I'm going to have a baby'" (1919 264). While moving across the Seine, Father Time symbolically is carrying Eveline from one phase of her life to the next. Here, Eveline seems to be aware that time moves her perhaps more than she can control the events of her life. The other female characters of *1919* never recognize time itself and its influence over their lives. Because of her cognizance, Eveline moves more easily through time. Daughter speeds through time without pausing to consider how time could work in her favor, whereas Janey and Eleanor stagnantly allow themselves to be carried away by time without any agency or awareness.

In her decision to marry Paul Johnson, Eveline feels the tension of the future and the past, domesticity and her freedom. If she marries him she must move back to the States and pick up the decorating business again. This is exactly the opposite of forward motion as far as she is concerned. Eveline discusses marriage with Paul and reveals that pregnancy and commitment will have an equal or greater effect on her life than on his: “Well don’t you think it changes my plans too?” said Eveline dryly. ‘It’s going over Niagara Falls in a barrel, that’s what it is’” (1919 265). She equates adopting the traditional gender roles of wife and mother with the risk of suicide. Unconvinced that marrying and having the child are the right choices to make, she must lie to herself in order to make the only real choice she has: “Eveline kept telling herself that Paul had stuff in him, that she was in love with Paul, that something could be made out of Paul” (1919 264). At least for her, having a baby means a new experience is to be gained: “At last Eveline said with a tight throat, ‘I want to have the little brat, Paul, we have to go through everything in life.’ Paul nodded” (1919 265). The “going through everything in life” that she speaks of reinforces Eveline’s desire to be in constant movement forward, even in her struggle for an identity that suits her.

Eveline, like Daughter, is associated with speed and movement, but she differs in that she is able maintain relative control over her life—if not the events of it, at least her reaction to it. More than any other character, Eveline understands her place in time and history, even if what she understands is that she is a relatively insignificant player on the world’s stage. Although she does ultimately choose the role of wife and mother, she does so hesitantly, reaffirming her rejection of stifling roles available to women. Eveline shows that at best, women can be aware of their limited options for speed and movement.

CHAPTER V

EPILOGUE

Women's characterizations from *The 42nd Parallel* to *1919* show women's shifting limitations and ability to handle movement in time. Janey and Eleanor are quite mobile until *1919* where they stagnate into symbols, and Daughter's life is a blur of two chapters before she self-destructs. Eveline is the only character who moves forward in the trilogy to *The Big Money*. The interpretation of the movement of these women has heretofore been lacking in substance, but this thesis shows that the fate of these female characters is inextricably linked to how they understand themselves in time.

Although Casey's work has given a valuable starting place for examining the women of *1919*, she ultimately falls short in her analysis. She argues for example, "The utter solipsism of these women—who lack not only fruitful occupation, but also social awareness, which is the trilogy's most prized trait—is appropriately symbolized by their eventual suicides, Daughter's via a willed plane crash while in the company of a drunken pilot, and Eveline's by her own hand in *The Big Money*" (163). Not all women in the *1919* are solipsistic as I have shown in Eveline's character, who possesses an acute awareness of her place in time and history. And if social awareness is the trilogy's most prized trait, then she certainly stands apart from the rest as the least stereotypical female, one who refuses to become a symbol. Furthermore, Casey argues, "Ultimately, everything about Daughter and Eveline—their naiveté regarding men, their emotional neediness, their shallow commitment to the war effort, even their empty

deaths—makes them appear lacking in substance, reinforcing a stereotypical vision of women as superficial and even superfluous, external to the meaningful events driving the war and hence the world of men” (163). While this analysis works for *Daughter*, Eveline has proven anything but naïve and shallow. While Casey believes that the women reinforce traditional symbolism, I have shown that even if women are “external to the meaningful events driving the war,” redemption lies in the ability to become cognizant of time and of history moving around them. In my analysis Eveline escapes Casey’s harsh critique through her complexity and her social awareness.

Looking forward to Eveline’s suicide in *The Big Money*, the limitations of women explored in this thesis become crystalized. With the right to vote given in 1920, the expanding boundaries for women’s participation in history seems to be imminent; however, as Eveline’s suicide in *The Big Money* shows, the limitations of women’s movements were not lifted overnight. Unfortunately, by *The Big Money*, Eveline’s awareness of herself and the world around her is not enough to save her. As Wagner writes, both *Daughter* and Eveline become “peripheral casualties of war” (100). More than war, Eveline seems to be a casualty of the speeding up of time. In *1919*, she is able to maintain a grasp on her place in history, but moving forward, understanding her place in the world becomes more difficult. As time continues to speed toward the boom in American capitalism, Eveline find herself unequipped to deal with the changing pace of life. Ultimately, the movement of time is Eveline’s downfall, despite her awareness of it.

Dos Passos’ female characters depict the harsh reality for women at the turn of the twentieth century, and arguably that was his goal. If *U.S.A.* is to be read as “the speech of the people” as he introduces the trilogy, then the voice being heard from women is ultimately one of

despair. *1919* shows a pivotal point in the changing social landscape for women and the varying ways in which they deal with the meaning of time itself, but as the trilogy progresses, the women begin to slowly fade into oblivion. Their erasure is partly due to the nature of time itself, which brings with it death and rebirth, but Dos Passos seems to be getting at a larger truth. As time moves forward, even with the new world of possibilities opening up for women, they are ill-equipped to move forward in the world. They stagnate, become symbols of what womanhood once was, or they fail to find a balance in the speed and constancy expected of women. Time casts darkness over the women of *U.S.A.* as their movement slows to a deadening halt.

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VITA

Natalie was born and raised in Fayetteville, TN. Upon graduation from Lincoln County High School in 2004, Natalie entered undergraduate studies at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. While at UTC, Natalie majored in English: Writing and minored in Women's Studies. She was a member of Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society, Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, Alpha Honor Society and was invited to Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, Mortar Board and Golden Key. She was awarded the 2007-2008 Outstanding Senior of the Year Award for English, which was voted on by the faculty. She graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2008. After graduation Natalie worked in the field of editorial management before returning to graduate studies at UTC in 2011. During her time as a graduate student, Natalie presented a paper at the 2012 American Literature Associate Conference in San Francisco. She later expanded the research for that presentation into several chapters for her completed Master's thesis. Natalie graduates in May 2013 with an emphasis in Literary Studies.